# Shrinathji and His journey to NathDwara

“Rath” means chariot and “Yatra” means pilgrimage. Usually, we go on pilgrimages to visit God. But here Shrinathji goes on a Rath Yatra to meet his devotees. What kind of hardships did Shrinathji face? What can we learn from him?

Shrinathji lived peacefully for several years on top of the hill of Govardhan. Vallabhacharya, Pooranmal, Ramdas, Krishnadas, Kumbhandas and Madhavanand took good care of him. Several devotees visited him every day.

After Vallabhacharya and Gusainji passed on to the divine realm, their descendants - Giridharji, Damodarji, Vittalraiji and Govindji continued to create awareness about Pushti Marg amongst the people. But Shrinathji knew he would have to leave the hill of Goverdhan soon. Historical events were waiting to unfold….

The Mughal ruler Aurangazeb was ruling over Delhi. He plundered and destroyed the temples in and around his kingdom. Govindji was taking care of Shrinathji’s temple during this time. He was anxious to protect the idol of Shrinathji so he discussed the matter with the

Vrajvasis. They decided to shift the idol of Shrinathji to a safer place till peace was restored in that region.

## Shrinathji begins his journey to NathDwara

The idol of Shrinathji was carried down the hill of Goverdhan and placed on to a Rath. The Vrajvasis pulled it through small villages, towns and wilderness to protect the idol from Aurangzeb's army. Shrinathji’s first halt was at one of his Havelis (mansion) in Agra.

The people of Agra were honoured by Shrinathji’s visit. They expressed their gratitude to Shrinathji by offering him an Anna-kut (mountain of food) before seeking his blessings.

If we offer what we have with faith to God, he will surely bless us.

## NavneetPriyaji meets Shrinathji at Agra

NavneetPriyaji, another form of Krishna (Nidhi Swaroop), was enshrined in a Haveli in Gokul at that time. Govindji arranged for the small idol of NavneetPriyaji to be brought to Agra.

It was a momentous occasion which was celebrated with a lot of gusto. Shrinathji and NavneetPriyaji were happy to meet each other and stayed together for

several days. After the idol of NavneetPriyaji was taken back to Gokul, Shrinathji continued with his journey – on his own.

We love meeting people who understand, support and love us unconditionally. But like Shrinathji, in the journey called life, we will always be on our own.

## Shrinathji protects his devotees in unknown ways

The chariot now reached the banks of river Chambal. Shrinathji spent his first Chaturmaas (holy period of four months) in Dandoti ghat near Chambal. Thousands of devotees thronged around Shrinathji's chariot to get a glimpse of his divinity.

Aurangazeb's army was patrolling the other side of Chambal. They were unaware of Shrinathji's secret Rath Yatra. From a distance, Shrinathji's chariot looked like a huge mountain and the sea of devotees looked like a shape-shifting monster to them. They feared the worst. So they turned around and fled.

God goes out of the way to keep us safe from unknown dangers! But often we don't even realize such things.

## Dandoti to Kota

Shrinathji's chariot them moved on to Kota, in Rajasthan. The king of Rajasthan, Annirudh Singh welcomed Shrinathji and his devotees into his kingdom. He requested them all to stay in a beautiful place called KrishnaVilaspur. Shrinathji agreed to do so. They lived here for several months and decided to move on after the next Chaturmaas.

Shrinathji asks us to enjoy the beauty of the 'here and now' as we move forward in the journey of our life.

## Kota to Ajmer and Pushkar

The Rath Yatra moved towards Jodhpur now. Shrinathji asked the Vrajvasis to halt for a while near Ajmer. He wanted to visit Pushkar too. He felt like wearing a garland made out of the lotuses that bloomed on the banks of the Triveni Sangam. The devotees made a lovely garland out of the lotus buds and offered it to him.

Shrinathji draped it around his neck, looked at himself in the mirror, was satisfied with his appearance so gave a nod of approval to his devotees and asked them to move on.

Like Shrinathji we too should learn to adorn, love and nurture our inner beauty, even amidst external turmoil.

## Pushkar to Kishangarh

From Jodhpur, the Rath yatra slowly moved to Kishangarh. The king of Kishangadh, Maan Singh welcomed Shrinathji warmly and asked him to reside there for as long as he wished to. It was springtime. The weather was beautiful. The trees were full of fragrant flowers. So Shrinathji decided to enjoy Nature's beauty to the fullest. They moved ahead after celebrating Holi, the festival of colours.

Seven different colours merge to create a colour called white. Shrinathji's message is clear: If we enjoy all the "seasons" and "colours" of life and take things as they come, someday, we too will be able to create peace for ourselves.

## Kishangadh to Visalpur

Shrinathji had a small task to take care of in Kishangarh. A couple of years back, one of his devotees had come from Kishangadh to Goverdhan to get his blessings. But after reaching there he realized that the hill of Goverdhan too was a form of Krishna. He did not want to step on one form of Krishna to get the blessings from another form. So he returned to Kishangadh with a heavy heart.

Shrinathji appeared in his dreams and told him that he would visit him the next day in Kishangadh! The devotee was overjoyed. The lord had come to meet him. What more could he ask for? He carried the choicest offerings for his lord. Shrinathji was delighted to meet him too. He accepted all his offerings, blessed him and then moved on towards Jodhpur.

It is fine if we are unable to visit God in temples. If we have faith in him, he comes to us when we least expect it.

## The Kadamba trees of Champasena

The Rath Yatra reached a small town called Champasena. Shrinathji loved the kadamba trees and the beauty of this small place. So he decided to spend his third Chaturmaas here.

The Rath Yatra was on the outskirts of Mewar now. Govindji met the Maharaja of Udaipur, RajSingh and discussed his mission of protecting and enshrining Shrinathji’s idol with him. The king supported him wholeheartedly and said he would be happy to build a Haveli for Shrinathji in his kingdom.

The Rath Yatra travelled through Mewar for over a fortnight. One fine day, when they reached Sinhad, in

Mewar, the wheel of the chariot suddenly got stuck in the mud. The chariot would not budge after that. The Vrajvasis realized that Shrinathji wished to reside in this spot. God's will prevails. Always.

## Gusainji's prediction & Shrinathji's promise to Ajab Kumari Bai.

Shrinathji had promised Ajab Kumari Bai that he would reside in Sinhad for several years in future. Gusainji too had predicted the same thing. Shrinathji kept his promise to Ajab Kumar Bai and Gusainji's prediction was proved right that day. God keeps all his promises – but in his own way and at the right time.

## Finally Peace Reigns Supreme

Govindji and the Vrajvasis had led a nomadic life during this phase. Shrinathji himself had lived in his chariot for 2 years, 5 months and 7 days! They were all happy when Maharaja RajSingh agreed to build a beautiful Haveli for Shrinathji in Sinhad.

But Mughal rulers continued to attack India. The idol of Shrinathji had to be hidden amidst thickets in nearby forests repeatedly. The political situation became peaceful for a brief while after that. So Govindji organized a meeting of the 7 main Nidhi swaroops of

Krishna in one place. He organized a ‘Chappan Bhog’ (56 varieties of food are offered to the lord) to mark this momentous occasion.

But the Holkars invaded Mewar after that. The king of Mewar, Maharana Singh joined forces with other neighbouring kings to overthrow the Holkars. Shrinathji lived in a Haveli in Ghasiad for several months during this phase.  Shrinathji was shifted back to his Haveli in Nathdwara when peace finally prevailed.

Shrinathji too had to experience, struggle and deal with the good, bad and ugly phases of his journey for peace to reign supreme. And he gives us the courage to do so too. Always.